

ESPIONAGE

A Blonde Bond

He planted a long, passionate kiss on my lips and pressed my back against the wall until I was limp. Then he swung easily off the floor and started to carry me up the stairs. "Charles," I resisted feebly, "what are you doing?" He looked at me hungrily. "Just out your bedroom," he said. "You have nothing to fear, chérie."

As a lover, Charles Brousse was the most ardent of all those I met in my career as a spy.

Despite the bottled-in-Bond flavor, the scene actually took place in wartime Washington. It was recounted recently in London's *The People* by its heroine, a Mata Hari from Minnesota who worked for British Intelligence under the code name Cynthia. Her real name: Elizabeth Pack. Using the boudoir as Ian Fleming's hero uses a Beretta, she was described by her wartime boss as "the greatest unsung heroine of the war." After the war Cynthia married her onetime prey, the ardent Charles, and with him retreated to a remote 19th-century French chateau where she died last week, at 53, of throat cancer.

Scooped Admiral. When World War II broke out, blonde, green-eyed Cynthia had been married for nine years to Arthur Pack, a colorless British diplomat who was nearly twice her age. The daughter of a U.S. Marine Corps colonel, at 29 she was adventurous, astute, attractive and from diligent years on Europe's diplomatic circuit, already an old hand at affairs of state. Leaving her husband, she returned to the U.S. shortly after the fall of France, immediately joined British Security Coordination (B.S.C.), the Manhattan-based intelligence and counterespionage network that was run by Sir William Stephenson, the famed "Quiet Canadian." He sent Cynthia to Washington, where she took a Georgetown house on O Street and went to work.

Cynthia's first big assignment was enough to daunt the wisest old pro: her orders were to get hold of the Italian naval code book. Within a few weeks of first meeting the shapeless Betty Pack, Italy's naval attaché, Admiral Alberto Lami, was so scooped by her that he surrendered the code to a hard-boiled, mumbling Italian apologist. Appalled that Lami, who died in 1955, was utterly so ungallant as to give his mistress a fake cipher book, U.S. Intelligence, however, British Intelligence, proved uncanonically adept at ferreting out his clandestine movements, so they in the March 1941 sea battle off Cape Matapan, where the Royal Navy crippled Italy's main fleet.

Outwitted Vichy. For the U.S. as well as Britain, Cynthia's most valuable comp was capturing the secret code used by the Vichy government's fleet. In fact, she and her wife have

the invasion of North Africa. Posing as a Washington newshen, Cynthia had already seduced the dashing Captain Brousse, then the press attaché in the Pétain government's Washington embassy, by playing on his hatred of the Nazis. She made him a willing ally. "I was not just indulging his desires so as to get him to disclose military and diplomatic intelligence," wrote Cynthia. "I was fulfilling a deep need of my own." Brousse more than satisfied her boss's needs as well by supplying daily copies of all French diplomatic cables. In 1942, when the embassy's naval attaché proved



CYNTHIA AS DEBUTANTE

"Charles, what are you doing . . . ?"

stubble but obdurately pro-Vichy, Brousse even agreed to help her filch the code books from the attaché's office so that they could be copied and returned to the embassy safe unnoticed.

Their tactics were exquisitely Gallie. Charles showed up at the embassy with Cynthia one night and, rustling a few dollar bills, whispered to the understanding watchman that Mme. Brousse was suspicious of their liaison (she was, indeed, and later divorced him). The embassy, Brousse explained to the guard, was the only place where he and his girl could rendezvous, and they soon became regular visitors. On the night they planned to hit the code, with the help of a safebreaker called the Georgia Crackers, they put the watchman to sleep with drugged champagne, only to find that the locks were so tough that they had to complete the job a few nights later.

By now, they guessed, the night watchman must suspect that it was not just about they were after. Sure enough, soon after Cynthia and her lover entered the darkened office, the door burst open and the watchman studied them under a powerful flashlight. Finally, he blurted, "L'égout, votre pardon, madame, a thousand times," and fled down the corridor. Before going to the safe, they had to wait for the watchman to leave the room. Cynthia and Charles then went to the safe and found the code books.